

VZCZCXR06527
RR RUEHDA
DE RUEHAK #0058 0121019
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 121019Z JAN 07
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0549
INFO RUEHHT/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7725
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BAKU 1442
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE 0085
RUEHBM/AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST 0952
RUEHCH/AMEMBASSY CHISINAU 0446
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KYIV 0008
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 5512
RUEHSF/AMEMBASSY SOFIA 1121
RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI 3085
RUEHTI/AMEMBASSY TIRANA 0256
RUEHYE/AMEMBASSY YEREVAN 1259
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1914
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 1518

UNCLAS ANKARA 000058

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: SENV ECON TU

SUBJECT: BSEC: TURKEY ASKS FOR FLESHED OUT PROPOSAL ON ENVIRONMENT

06 STATE 162288
06 ANKARA 6154
Istanbul draft

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Turkey seeks to coordinate with the U.S. and the EU as it composes its strategy for its BSEC chairmanship starting in May 2007. Its priority areas are trade and development, transportation, energy security and safety, organized crime, and environment. Turkey asks that the U.S. flesh out its proposal for a workshop on environment enforcement in a written product. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) In a January 8 meeting, MFA DDG Ahmet Asim Arar said Turkey is formulating a strategy paper in advance of its six-month BSEC chairmanship commencing in May. He said Turkey wants to harmonize its strategies with the EU and the U.S. and noted that the European Commission is also formulating a Black Sea strategy that it aims to roll it out at the June EU Summit. By coincidence, BSEC's Istanbul Summit will occur 2-3 days later, offering an opportunity to build on the EU approach. Arar hoped that the U.S. too could make a contribution that fits into Turkey's Chairmanship.

¶3. (SBU) Arar expressed support for the U.S. idea of BSEC hosting a workshop on environmental enforcement best practices (refs), suggesting that the U.S. flesh it out as a written concrete proposal for presentation to the PERMIS. He suggested that the U.S. consider making the submission in advance of the next meeting of the environmental protection working group, which will be held March 14-15 in Istanbul (chaired by Turkey). Arar also noted that there should eventually be consultation with the Black Sea Commission. He said BSEC had a seed project feasibility fund that can fund up to \$15,000 to help start projects. He admitted that observers have not yet played such an active role in BSEC, but he welcomed the U.S. setting a precedent for a more dynamic observer-hip.

¶4. (SBU) Arar said Turkey would also welcome U.S. ideas for projects in trade and transportation. He described Turkey's current Black Sea trade facilitation project, which is being implemented in cooperation with the UNDP. The project envisions carrying out market and company product surveys, followed by a buyer-seller matchmaking forum.

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